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## PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

**National Academy of Sciences.**—A special stated session of the Academy met on Saturday, February 9th, 1895, in New York City, at Columbia College, to consider the Report of the Committee on Electrical Units. The report was adopted and was ordered to be transmitted to Congress.

**Boston Society of Natural History.**—January 16.—The following papers were read: Prof. E. S. Morse, "Korean Interviews;" Mr. Percival Lowell, "Korea and the Koreans."

February 20th.—The following paper was read: Prof. Edmund B. Wilson, "Karyokinesis and the Fertilization of the Ovum;" illustrated by stereopticon views photographed directly from the eggs of the sea-urchin (*Toxopneustes variegatus*).

March 6th.—The following papers were read: Mr. L. S. Griswold, "The Geographical History of the Lower Mississippi;" Mr. C. F. Marbut, "Some Features of the Coastal Plain in the Mississippi Embayment;" Mr. Cleveland Abbe, Jr., "Note on Cusped Sand-bars of the Carolina Coast."—SAMUEL HENSHAW, *Secretary*.

**The Biological Society of Washington.**—February 9th.—The paper of the evening was "Explanation of Immunity from Infectious Diseases," by Surg.-Gen'l George M. Sternberg, U. S. A.

February 23d.—The following communications were made: Prof. Lester F. Ward, "Archetypal Angiosperms;" Prof. F. E. L. Beal, "Food Habits of Woodpeckers;" Mr. F. A. Lucas, "Some Abnormal Feet of Mammals;" Mr. M. B. Waite, "Notes on the Flora of Washington."—FREDERIC A. LUCAS, *Secretary*.

**Nova Scotia Institute of Science.**—February 11th.—The following papers were read: "The Iron Ores of Nictaux N. S., with Notes on the Manufacture of Steel in Nova Scotia," by Edwin Gilpin, Jr., Esq., LL. D., F. G. S., Inspector of Mines; "Geological Notes on the Nictaux Iron Fields," by A. H. MacKay, Esq., LL. D., F. R. S. C., Superintendent of Education.—HARRY PIERS, *Secretary*.

**New York Academy of Sciences. Biological Section.**—February 11th, 1895.—The following papers were presented: Dr. Albert Schneider, "The Occurrence and Functions of Rhizobia;" a

discussion of the discovery of the adaptability of rhizobia to other plants than leguminous. Some conclusions based upon investigations carried on at the Illinois experiment station were given to show that it is probable that rhizobia may be so modified as to grow in and upon roots of gramineous plants (ex. Indian corn). Prof. N. L. Britton, "An Undescribed *Ranunculus* from the Mountains of Virginia;" Dr. J. L. Wortman, "On the So-called Devil's Corkscrews of Nebraska." A visit to the locality during the past summer had enabled him to study many problems in connection with their occurrence, which tend to throw considerable light upon their nature. The formation in which they occur was positively identified as the Loup Fork division of the upper Miocene, which is a true sedimentary deposit. The *Daemonelix* occurs in a stratum of from 50 to 75 feet in thickness, always standing vertically, and their tops are not confined to any one level. They vary much in size and character, but, so far as observed, always present the spiral twist. The fact that they occur in true sedimentary rocks, that their tops occupy many levels, together with the lack of evidence to show that there was any disturbance of level during the time the sediment was being laid down, was considered to totally disprove the theory that they represent the burrows of animals which has been so extensively held in explanation of their curious nature. The invariable presence of plant-cells, together with other facts, leads to the conclusion that they very probably represent the remains of roots or stems of some gigantic water plant.

"The Excretory System of *Clepsine* and *Nephelis*," by Dr. Arnold Graf. The results of H. Bolsius have proved to be erroneous. The different parts of the nephridium are classified as follows: 1. *Infundibulum*, consisting in *Nephelis* of six bilobed ciliated cells, in *Clepsine* of a peduncle cell, pierced by a ciliated canal, and two bilobed ciliated cells attached to the peduncle. 2. *Receptaculum excretorium*. A vesicle which is in open communication with the funnel and in osmotic communication with the following parts of the nephridium. It is similar in both genera, and filled with disintegrating material. 3. *Portio afferentia*. The part of the gland, consisting of a single row of round cells, pierced by a sometimes bifurcated canal, which gives off-branched side canals. Similar in both genera. 4. *Portio glandulosa*. Row of cells, pierced by a smooth canal without side branches of bifurcation. This part is the largest part of the whole organ. Similar in both genera. 5. *Vesicula terminalis*. In *Nephelis*, a vesicle, lined by a ciliated epithelium; in *Clepsine*, a simple pouch of the *epidermis*, without cilia. 6. *Canalis terminalis*. The short canal by which the termi-

nal vesicle communicates with the exterior. Present in *Nephelis*. In *Clepsine* it is equivalent to the terminal vesicle.

The cells formerly called Chloragocells, should now be called *Exeretophores*. A preliminary about these cells has been sent to the "Zoologischer Anzeiger." The investigation had been carried out mainly on living tissues, and every source of error had been eliminated.

—BASHFORD DEAN, *Secretary*.

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### SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

**John A. Ryder**, Professor of Histology and Embryology in the School of Biology of the University of Pennsylvania, died on March 26th. He was born in 1852 near Linden in Franklin Co., Pennsylvania, of old "Pennsylvania German" stock, and displayed a strong predilection as a small boy for the study of nature. At school he was persistent in the pursuit of his favorite subject, and took little part in the sports and quarrels of the boys with whom he was associated. His sensitiveness to their criticisms was such that he ran away from school, only to devote himself more fully to study. He came to Philadelphia and was soon deep in microscopic work. At that time the methods of preparation of objects for the microscope were not as well understood as they have since become, and Ryder invented most of the methods which he used in his first researches. His studies of the embryology of fishes led to his appointment on the U. S. Fish Commission, where he published a number of important papers on the embryology of fishes and mollusca, and among the latter, the oyster was an especial object of investigation. In 1886 he was appointed to the position which he held at the time of his death. Professor Ryder was an indefatigable investigator, and his published papers, though numerous, give little idea of his activity. He has left behind him manuscript of considerable importance, which it is to be hoped will be published with the aid of a worthy editor. He was for a considerable time editor of the department of embryology of the *American Naturalist*.

Besides excellent powers of observation, Professor Ryder had a mind naturally capable of comprehending mechanics. He patented several inventions of economic value. This tendency is to be seen especially in his application of mechanics to the problems of evolution, in which he presented many original ideas. He was a strong supporter of the Neolamarkian school; and he carried this hypothesis into the explanation of histogenesis with more success than any American,